



**DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY**

**HANFORD ADVISORY BOARD (HAB)  
Public Involvement and Communication Committee (PIC)**

*May 11, 2021*

*Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams*

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*This is only a summary of issues and actions discussed at this meeting. It may not represent the fullness of represented ideas or opinions, and it should not be used as a substitute for actual public involvement or public comment on any particular topic unless specifically identified as such.*

## **Opening**

Stan Branch, US Department of Energy (DOE), announced that this meeting was being held in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Ruth Nicholson, HAB Facilitator, welcomed meeting participants and disclosed that the meeting was being recorded.

Jeff Burright, Oregon Department of Energy and PIC chair, noted changes in PIC meeting scheduling and provided an overview of the meeting's agenda.

## **Round Robin Discussion**

As an introduction to the round robin discussion, Jeff noted that Hanford received a lot of media attention related to a recently discovered leak in Tank B-109, issues related to addressing high-level waste (HLW), the overall tank waste treatment mission, and other site-level news.

He provided the discussion topic for the committee to consider: "How does media coverage affect Hanford Cleanup? Has it been different during COVID?" He invited PIC members to provide thoughts.

Jeff noted that he checked the Tri-City Herald on a daily basis for Hanford-related news and would sometimes see Hanford-related articles in a Salem, Oregon-based newspaper, indicating that interest in Hanford had a wide geographic range. Regarding the role of the media, he noted that it tended to serve to amplify situations, opening them for conversation where they may have otherwise been background issues, providing the B-109 tank leak as an example where reporting resulted in renewed discussion on tank waste management. He noted that he wished there were better means of public engaging with news and providing feedback, such as comment sections for news outlets.

He noted that it can be difficult to determine the intended audience for a given article, with potential audiences ranging from public to Congressional delegation members. He wondered if media coverage could have the ironic effect of making information more difficult to get due to worry about how news would be received or amplified. He was unsure if media was a net-detractor for Hanford.

Steve Anderson, Grant and Franklin Counties, believed that COVID had reduced discussion on Hanford-related discussions, possibly related to the reduced activity on site.

Liz Mattson, Hanford Challenge, thought that, at best, media attention on Hanford provides attention to issues that were otherwise difficult to discuss such as whistleblowers or fraud cases. It would get public attention on things that needed to be fixed and functioned as a means of accountability.

At worst, however, it could create a sense of divisiveness and caused people to try to present issues in the best way possible to get a desired result. It could be damaging to getting solutions that work where divisiveness was created as did not create an environment for inquiry or understanding. She noted that she observed less media coverage during the COVID pandemic as other issues had the media spotlight.

Tom Sicilia, Oregon Department of Energy, noted that without the opportunity to talk in person, most Hanford-related information was learned only through official media releases. Nuance was lost as there was no opportunity to ask questions or gain clarification. He felt that it was important to keep media and news flowing, but also important that they did not lose other sources of information.

Dan Solitz, Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board, noted that he did not see a lot of media related to Hanford outside of social media, and of that, most of what he had seen was prepared by the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) agencies. He commended the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) for its recent

Facebook social media event focusing on Hanford Site history. He felt that similar events would serve to help people understand what was at the Hanford Site and what needed to be done with it.

He also noted that, though he was not a regular reader of Tri-Cities area newspapers, he hoped that young Tri-Cities area reporters would be able to take knowledge of Hanford with them should they move about the state or country.

Amber Waldref, Heart of America Northwest, noted that it was interesting to read about Hanford from an observer perspective over the preceding years. Her observation was that the Spokane, Washington area would only receive occasional news related to the Hanford Site. She felt that news or media needed to be consistently presented for it to remain in the minds of the public. She felt that negative news was featured most prominently in Spokane but acknowledged the need for that news as it was important for accountability, per Liz's previous point. She noted that the media landscape had changed during the pandemic, shifting toward public health. If the TPA agencies wanted more media coverage, they would benefit from connecting Hanford news to public health.

Jacob Reynolds, Non-Union, Non-Management Employees, felt that media coverage could distort priorities, with potential consequences both good and bad. As an example, embarrassment by media could spur action, which could be good, but could also shift priorities from areas that were in need of greater attention.

Angela Day, Citizens for a Clean Eastern Washington, felt that Hanford existed in a "bubble" in regard to media. After her consistent involvement with Hanford ended, she felt that she saw and heard very little regarding Hanford in the news sources that she followed. She thought pertinent questions to ask for this discussion topic were those of "Who does Hanford news coverage reach?" and "who should it be reaching?"

She felt that Hanford needed greater public involvement, which would only occur with a conscious effort to reach key communities, such as the agricultural community. She felt that increased media coverage would be helpful but was unsure if it would benefit the parties involved in cleanup, which would pose a challenge getting the increased coverage.

Jeff thought that there were "pillars" of media sources for Hanford, such as the Tri-City Herald and social media, but there existed many other ways in which people would get their news. He wondered if they needed to reach out to more diverse media outlets to gauge their interest, if the pillars needed to better express why their audiences should care about Hanford, or should they seek and reach out to the other communities.

Angela responded, stating that it should not be left up to other communities to come and try to figure out why they should be interested in Hanford. Hanford coverage spoke to those that were already engaged with or understood the Site. She reiterated that without agreement that broader interest would be beneficial, the outreach and coverage was unlikely to happen.

Jacob noted that people in general would not find news beneficial if it was not entertaining. He provided the example of a finance-related media source, Forbes, that would publish Hanford-related articles just because a talented and entertaining writer on their staff had an interest in writing on the subject. To get more media attention, they would need to figure out how to make Hanford entertaining.

### *Regulatory Perspectives*

Ginger Wireman, Ecology, noted that Tri-City Herald staff writer Annette Cary was instructed to prioritize COVID in reporting. The Tri-City Herald only staffed three reporters at the time and its

editorial staff was based in Boise, ID. She noted that the DOE prime contractors had the freedom to run full-page advertisements focused on their community involvement that required no input from Ecology; coverage could be very one-sided, and she was frustrated by the lack of input.

Ginger was curious about the agricultural community news sources Angela had alluded to. In the past, she had heard that Hanford and farms were not typically spoken of together, as it would impact the perception of the area's agricultural output to proximity to the Hanford Site. She hoped to reach out to those communities. Angela responded, stating that the media source she was referring to was Capital Press. Angela acknowledged that the farming community would loathe to hear about waste cleanup near them. She noted that agriculture was a huge economic driver in the region and that the agricultural community would likely prefer to pretend that Hanford didn't exist, however, it would benefit their community to be aware and involved.

Ginger noted that, should the HAB members be interested in writing opinion pieces for their local newspapers, Ecology staff and subject matter experts (SMEs) would be willing to support the effort.

Ryan Miller, Ecology, provided his perspective. He noted that his team was seeing more engagement in social media than he used to on social media platforms, though noticed a drop starting with the COVID pandemic. He typically saw more coverage for big events such as the tank leak or Ecology's issuing a penalty to DOE.

Roberto Armijo, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), provided his perspective as a newcomer to the Hanford Site. He used social media as a learning tool, utilizing various sources to gain a broader understanding of issues and perspectives.

Gary Younger, DOE, noted the challenges in anticipating how audiences would receive news or stories prior to development and submission, and once sent, the lack of feedback. It would be difficult to know which stories resonated with audiences. He noted that even within the Tri-Cities area, many may know little of Hanford beyond the name. He thought the outreach conversation was a good one to have and provided the idea of writing quarterly letters to the editor for the local newspaper.

Ryan added that he moved from the Tri-Cities to Selah, WA in 2007 and learned that most people there did not know about Hanford and news on the subject had little to no presence, despite being in the same state. He also noted that social media could be interesting work, subject to the whims of day-to-day activity of the users. He could never be sure of the results or which items would take off.

### *Committee Discussion*

Tom followed up on Gary's idea of a quarterly editorial, noting that developing an executive summary of the HAB annual report might be useful for release to the media.

Gerry Pollet, Heart of America Northwest, stated that Hanford was newsworthy because of risk. If there was no news coverage, the site would not be funded by Congress, and that continued reporting was necessary to protect the regular funding it received. He noted that reporting resulted in breakthroughs at Hanford, providing the example of the recent tank leak being revealed by King 5 News rather than DOE. He felt that reporters lacked the time and energy they used to have in order to investigate Hanford and instead relied upon whistleblowers. He felt that the public could not rely on news reporters anymore and that the HAB members would need to do the work in presenting potential news.

Emmitt Jackson, Non-Union, Non-Management Employees, like the idea of quarterly editorials and considered the option of submitting summaries of advice issued. He wondered if the HAB had available a list of friendly magazines or news outlets that reported on Hanford. He noted that another aspect to

consider in outreach was schools, hoping that by reaching out to students they would in turn go onward to become ambassadors. When something negative would come forth in the news, the students would be better informed and able to intelligently discuss the subject.

Jeff reflected on the discussions that had occurred to that point, noting that many good ideas were brought forth, while raising many more questions.

### **Draft Meeting Summary**

The committee moved to adopt the March 2021 PIC Meeting Summary following several updates to the attendees list.

### **Announcements**

Roberto announced that Emerald Laija, EPA, would be unavailable until the middle of July and that he would serve as the EPA contact instead.

### **Tri-Party Agreement Public Involvement Calendar**

Dana Gribble, Hanford Mission Integration Solutions (HMIS), presented the TPA Public Involvement Calendar.

She noted that Hanford.gov hosts an events calendar that is continuously updated with the most current information. The Hanford Events Calendar can be found at:

<https://www.hanford.gov/pageAction.cfm/calendar>

She discussed the events on the calendar and important dates around each event.

Jeff noted that, in relation to the M-091 Milestone, the Tri-City Herald featured an article the previous day, written by Annette Cary. He appreciated the work she put into the article. Regarding the Low-Activity Waste Pretreatment System (LAWPS) entry on the calendar, Jeff noted that he thought that LAWPS had been abandoned in favor of Tank-Side Cesium Removal (TSCR). Dana clarified that there had not yet been an official decision either way, as far as she knew, but it was not a project she was involved in.

Jennifer Colborn, HMIS, reminded the audience that some of the dates listed were still tentative. Comment period durations could change, so it was best to confirm dates through the Hanford Events Calendar online rather than relying on distributed calendars.

Regarding the Site-Wide Permit, Liz asked if there were any status updates and what was planned with Revision 9. Daina McFadden, Ecology, stated that it was still being worked on and that Ecology was hoping to issue the next revision in 2022. The permit writers were still working with DOE on several aspects and the collaboration process made release timing uncertain.

Gerry was concerned that the budget priorities meeting was held on the first day of the comment period. He asked if the public and HAB would be provided access to the proposals and materials in advance of the meeting and if there would be a budget priorities workshop, hoping to collaborate in planning of the public meeting. Gary noted that another HAB member made a similar request and that he would keep each of them in the loop on what information could be shared. Gerry requested that the Ecology representatives comment on the subject. Ginger Wireman, Ecology, stated that Ecology would continue to push for the level of transparency that they had in the past, committing the appropriate Ecology representatives to discuss the issue with higher-level management.

## **Hanford Live**

Jennifer provided an overview of the Hanford Live event, thanking HAB members for taking the time to review Hanford Live materials and taking the time to fill out a related survey.

She noted that they would be doing a bigger launch of the event that following week with marketing that included flyers, banners, and ads. She noted that there was a change in the approach to registration as they were now providing the link up front, rather than asking potential audiences to expect it at a later date. This would allow people to share the invitation with friends and family. She noted that the HAB members could share the event at that time by going to Ecology's Facebook page. She explained the differences in format as a result of the COVID pandemic, requiring all panelists to be virtual.

Ryan noted that both DOE Office of River Protection (DOE-ORP) and Richland Operations (DOE-RL) would serve as co-hosts for the upcoming event.

Jeff asked if audiences would be able to submit video questions or if questions would be relayed through a facilitator. Jennifer noted that there were no plans for the option of video questions that year and that a facilitator would pass questions onward to the panelist.

Jeff wondered if it would be worthwhile to reach out to some non-traditional media outlets, such as those noted in the morning's round-robin discussion. Jennifer recalled previous instances where Ecology put out notices in media outlets such as the local community-driven newspaper, Tumbleweird. She intended to further examine the subject in a forthcoming meeting.

Ginger asked about the option of paid advertisements. Ryan said that that was an ongoing challenge due to payment methods and authorization required but hoped to implement it in the future.

Jeff encouraged PIC members to share the event within their own social groups. He noted that they should be accountable for bringing others "into the fold."

Liz asked questions related to the format and presentation. She wondered if the HAB chair would present for Hanford Live. Jennifer confirmed that he would and that he was aware; his presentation was in the planning stages.

Ryan further discussed Ecology's new efforts in initiating discussion about Hanford. The organization had been looking at putting on virtual events for some time, though COVID pushed the intended timeline up. The events were intended to provide the opportunity for audiences to learn about Hanford, provide additional perspective, or a refresher, serving audiences at multiple levels of familiarity.

One month prior, Ecology released a video outlining the plan for the series, noting that the first would focus on early Hanford history. They partnered with Robert Franklin of Washington State University Tri-Cities for the subject matter and presentation. Leading up to the first event, Ecology sent out a listserv notice and a preview blog for the event, sharing what it would consist of and how to watch. Leading up to the event, they ended up reaching 2,566 people and received 117 responses, which included 93 interested and 24 listing that they would attend the event. Those results were without paid advertising or boosting.

Leading up to the event, Ecology experienced strong collaboration with other agencies. There was good engagement and the word got out organically. The video reached 1,200 people and had 324 views. There were between 32 to 39 simultaneous watchers during the live event. The video statistics showed an average of 5-minute view time, which may be skewed; he knew that some viewers watched for the entire runtime. The audience posed questions throughout the event.

Ecology determined that groundwater would be the focus of their next event.

Ecology heard concerns related to Facebook, with the example of some potential viewers not wanting to use the platform. They were investigating options for dual streaming using another service.

Ryan stated that, overall, he thought the event went well. There was strong engagement and Ecology received positive feedback. He hoped that they can build an audience going forward. As an agency, Ecology intends to start working on advertisement and boosting.

Jeff wondered if there were any aspects of the event that surprised Ecology or unexpected questions received. Ryan noted that there were several questions related to indigenous people being forcefully removed from the land at Hanford along with more questions overall than they expected. Ginger agreed, further elaborating that people also asked if the land would be redistributed or parted out. She noted that the land had been purchased, so no one was forcefully removed. She also noted that it might be an interesting topic to examine in the future.

Jeff noted that he used YouTube as a resource when starting his job and was glad to see that those types of conversations were being saved.

Emmitt asked about the schedule for the Facebook Hanford events going forward. Ryan stated that the plan was to host one event every month, with the groundwater topic planned for June. They conducted a survey on topics to present on, resulting in options that included the Tank Farms, additional history topics, and Hanford habitat and wildlife. He considered possibilities of partnership with other agencies such as the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Liz noted that she has been involved in a Hanford-based teaching project for educators using Zoom and saw potential for collaboration on future topics. Emmitt noted that Washington State history was a requirement for graduating seniors in the state, which would be a good place to begin teaching Hanford history. Gerry noted that there were available means of influencing curriculum development in the state, provided an example of a module his Public Health students created, incorporating Washington's learning standards and outcomes for different courses which was presented to over 150 educators. He noted that not all schools use the same textbooks and that they could not expect to uniformly influence all publishers and that comprehension below the high school level may not be sufficient for Hanford-related topics. The topic was deferred for potential reexamination in the future.

#### **Draft Advice – Public Involvement for Key TPA Documents**

Jeff introduced the advice topic, and Gerry provided background. Jeff explained the intention behind the initial version of the document and changes that had been made as a result of Issue Manager (IM) team discussions. Of particular note, the format for presentation of advice was changed, presenting the HAB's advice and the context in a more concise manner and included the detailed background context as an appendix. This allowed it to still be reviewed by those not immediately familiar with the context of the advice, but without feeling overbearing to those that were.

The committee discussed the details of the advice. Several of the individual points of the advice was considered to ensure that the intended message was both clear and necessary. They examined potential wording choices for clarity, accuracy, and avoiding euphemistic statements. The word "diversity" was determined to require a separate conversation to further consider its meaning and implications.

Jeff asked for committee opinions on the change in presentation for background detail on the advice. Tom considered the alternate option of linking the background to meeting minutes content instead, citing the challenge of getting consensus for the background as it was still part of the advice. Liz noted that the

change in presentation was in response to DOE input and did not expect that it would take long for the full board to approve, so long as it was sufficiently edited prior to presentation.

Steve felt that the background was still appropriate to have with the advice, but felt it was something that should be read first. Jeff clarified that the body of the advice still provides context for the advice with enough specificity to understand the premise. Steve accepted the explanation and noted that the explanation would likely serve to convince the full board to accept the change.

Following some additional changes for document consistency and clarity, the committee moved to send the advice as revised for consideration of the full board.

### **Open Forum**

As the committee considered timing around presentation of the resulting advice to the HAB as a whole, topics of discussion shifted toward discussion of the content of the next full board meeting. Gary noted that DOE was putting together a brief on the Direct-Feed Low Activity Waste (DFLAW) project, which would take a broad approach, allowing it to serve as a “Hanford 101” training session.

Gary also noted that in the next meeting, the group would need time to consider questions related to the Committee of the Whole, along with discussion of the work plan and calendar. Tom noted that discussion on HAB Advice #283 could serve as a primer for the end states topic. Liz suggested holding an IM team call regarding the Committee of the Whole in order to bring a more focused discussion to the full board meeting.

Emmitt recalled the question of diversity and its implications during discussion of the advice, noting it merited a discussion of its own. Jeff agreed, stating a could become a discussion for a future meeting.

### **HAB Member Self-Assessment**

Jeff introduced the topic of HAB member self-assessment, encouraging committee members to discuss interactions they have held with people outside of the HAB on the topic of Hanford.

Tom noted that he gave a presentation to the Oregon House of Representatives where he talked about nuclear energy and activism in the area. It involved Hanford history and information and the presentation seemed to be well received. Jeff noted that this presentation was available online for those interested.

Liz noted the fatigue involved in online meetings, finding it challenging to engage with others due to the lack of in-person meeting time and lack of casual conversations. She noted her work with the University of Washington School of Public Health and a recent project that examined the topic “do we have a right to an uncontaminated body?” It led to questions of Hanford cleanup levels, future land use scenarios, and other future planning considerations. The project resulted in engagement with people that previously had no knowledge of Hanford.

Jeff relayed recent experiences with outdoor barbeques hosted at his house where he would talk about his work. He found that there was a fine line to walk in order to avoid overwhelming or boring people. He noted that his organization was putting together a selection of key positions and interests, which he hoped could be useful. He also had an opportunity to be interviewed by Northwest Public Broadcasting, where he was able to discuss the conflicts around Hanford and why the public should care.

Ginger recalled a trip she made to California to visit her son where she ended up engaging in conversation related to groundwater remediation. She introduced the individual to groundwater cleanup at Hanford, which he had heard about, but knew little of. She noted a book by Bill Bryson that discussed a town that



burned for over 40 years; she had never heard of that prior to reading the book, which served as an indication that there could be events going on throughout the country that the public did not know about.

Ryan considered the possibility of sharing his Hanford-related work through his connections at the University of Kansas as he pursued his master's degree.

Steve noted interest in the general opinions or perceptions about radiation held by the general public. He stated that he planned to discuss outreach with local business associations and would reach out for Hanford Live notifications. Dan noted that he observed a lot of misconceptions about nuclear waste during his time spent on social media. The public understanding of what waste Hanford contains and what can be done with it was at a very low level and felt that DOE could help define those better. He thought there should be more work in that regard on a national level. Jeff agreed, noting his own observations of confusion between defense waste and nuclear power waste.

Liz considered the possibility of advertising Ecology's listserv through the Hanford Challenge website and HAB weekly update. Ryan noted that they would consider putting out an announcement on social media.

### **Committee Business**

Jeff introduced the HAB work plan being developed for the next fiscal year. He noted that there were fewer items overall, but each were more general in nature. He provided an overview of each item within the workplan. He hoped to discuss which items to include in the work plan for the next PIC meeting and how to arrange work throughout the next year.

Tom suggested adding the topic of environmental justice to the work plan. He noted that it would be interesting to see how TPA agencies define the term internally, common threads between each of their views, and how it aligned with the committee's ideas. Jeff acknowledged that it was an important topic to examine but would require time to do research ahead of any discussions in order to increase the PIC's capacity to discuss the topic.

Gary noted that it would be a good opportunity to engage outside groups for perspectives as well, noting that a HAB nominee was part of the GreenLatinos environmental group and could potentially discuss the topic. Tom considered additional options for speakers, such as tribal agency representatives or others within the TPA, wanting to ensure that an inclusive decision could be made.

Jeff noted that advice on the subject implies the need for change or action. He was open to on how to approach the topic. Ginger noted that she recently discussed the topic with Roberto and that Washington State recently passed a law related to environmental justice, which could be worth looking into. Ecology was hiring staff dedicated to the topic of environmental justice so she expected that Ecology would be able to effectively present on that topic in the future. She wanted to ensure that the HAB considered it in broad terms, rather than focusing solely on people of color, providing the example of low-income residents that were subject to traffic fumes that resulted from Hanford Site traffic.

Regarding the draft work plan, Liz suggested adding a disclaimer stating that not all topic listed required presentations, in order to avoid TPA agencies feeling overwhelmed by expectations.

Following discussion of the work plan, Ruth presented the calendar and provided an overview of the content. She noted that the calendar was still in development and dates were subject to change. She expressed her preference for committee call placeholders being placed three weeks prior to meetings, providing her sufficient time to prepare and distribute agendas.

Jeff considered topics for the following meeting. He hoped to begin discussions on environmental justice and noted that he might ask for volunteers to bring some initial thoughts and research to initiate discussions on the topic. He noted recommendations from a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report that suggested DOE engage with the public in technical conversations around tank closure. He hoped that PIC could provide more specific expectations about the kind of public engagement that should be expected from DOE. He asked for additional suggestions for topics.

Tom noted that the 100-BC Record of Decision (ROD) was expected to be released shortly. In previous HAB advice it was requested that DOE and the National Park Service work with PIC to determine language used about environmental cleanup at the national park, so it could be worth reviewing.

With no further committee business, the committee adjourned.

### **Attachments**

Attachment 1: [Public Involvement and Communication Committee Agenda](#)

Attachment 2: [Draft Meeting Summary from PIC March 16, 2021 Meeting](#)

Attachment 3: [Tri-Party Agreement Agencies Public Involvement Calendar, May 2021 – July 2021](#)

Attachment 4: [PIC Draft Advice – Public Involvement in Vision and Guiding Documents](#)

Attachment 5: [PIC Work Plan](#)

### **Attendees**

#### **Board Members and Alternates:**

Steve Anderson, Primary	Emmitt Jackson, Primary	Liz Mattson, Primary
Gerry Pollet, Primary	Jacob Reynolds, Primary	Dan Solitz, Primary
Jeff Burright, Alternate	Angela Day, Alternate	Tom Sicilia, Alternate
Amber Waldref, Alternate		

#### **Others:**

Stan Branch, DOE	Randy Bradbury, Ecology	Abigail Zilar, GSSC for DOE
Gary Younger, DOE	Daina McFadden, Ecology	Dieter Bohrmann, CPCCo
	Ryan Miller, Ecology	Jennifer Colborn, HMIS
	Kyle Rucker, Ecology	Patrick Conrad, HMIS
	Ginger Wireman, Ecology	Coleen Drinkard, HMIS
	Roberto Armijo, EPA	Dana Gribble, HMIS
		Gabriel Bohnee
		Denise Jones
		Scott Fillmon, HAB Facilitation Team

		Ruth Nicholson, HAB Facilitation Team
		Joshua Patnaude, HAB Facilitation Team

Note: Participants for this virtual meeting were asked to sign in with their name and affiliation in the chat box of Microsoft Teams. Not all attendees shared this information. The attendance list reflects what information was collected at the meeting.

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